

NASW-NYS Political Post

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High profile week for the Governor... The Governor's plan to cut nearly nine thousand state jobs sparked a flurry of meetings between union leaders and the administration this week but by press time, the only thing each side seemed to agree on was the notion that they were owed an apology... from each other! Hope no one is holding their breath on that one! In the meantime, the Governor issued a breakdown of his proposed lay-offs by agency. Those hardest hit are the Department of Corrections (DOCS) with 2,021 proposed job cuts, the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) at 1,434 and the Office of Mental Health (OMH) at 1,054. News of the Governor's proposed breakdown seemed only to fuel the fire as union leaders weighed in... "The governor continues to claim to have only two choices: accept the concessions he has demanded or face layoffs. There is a third choice: cut the enormous wasteful spending on private contractors. Unfortunately, the governor continues to move forward with the most damaging choice, layoffs" said Public Employee Federation President Kenneth Brynien. CSEA spokesman, Stephen Madarasz noted they "won't accept an offer floated this week by the Paterson administration to avoid mass layoffs by accepting smaller raises and a no-layoff guarantee for two years. The union can't reopen its contract because it would set a debilitating precedent." New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association (NYSCOPBA) President Donn Rowe publicly blasted the Governor's proposal as well upon learning the cuts to DOCs would be in addition to the jobs lost due to slated prison closures "This is hypocrisy at an all-time high—even for this Governor," the Administration has charged the Agency Commissioner with the job of making these cuts without negatively impacting public safety—a task we do not have confidence he can properly accomplish. This move will threaten public safety and mean disproportional layoffs for upstate communities that are already facing tough economic times."

In other governor news - The Governor did make good on a promise he made earlier this year to shave his own salary by ten percent (or \$18,000). Paterson's press secretary Errol Cockfield said "the governor wrote the check from his personal account on March 18, about two weeks after he announced he would be making the symbolic gesture in the face of a multibillion dollar deficit."

And yet, a bit more ... Governor Paterson announced plans to introduce a gay marriage bill in the next few weeks and while that may be music to some peoples ears, some aren't quite singing his tune. Usually a bill is not brought to the floor for a vote in either house until the sponsor(s) are sure it has enough votes to pass but in this case, Paterson suggests he will introduce the measure and encourage an open debate on the Senate floor. "I'm going to put the bill out and just let people fight it out," said Paterson on WGR-AM in Buffalo. "I would like to see the Legislature just debate the bills that people think are controversial. If it loses, it loses. Such a strategy is not sitting well with gay rights advocates..." "Why would you want people to vote on something that you knew wasn't going to get passed," said Alan Van Capelle, executive director of the Empire State Pride Agenda, "We're not interested in making statements."